

SUCCESS

Lake County Workforce Development is a partner of the Job Center of Lake County.

Workforce Development receives grants from the U.S. Department of Labor including Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) grants to fund programs designed to cultivate and connect employers and the workforce.

Lake County Workforce Development

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Work Experience Helped Her Shine

Looking for a job during a pandemic is not easy – imagine needing to rebuild your life, connections and employment in a time of social isolation. That is what **Jessica** found herself doing in April 2020 after she was released from prison. Through the collaboration of community partners such as Lake County Workforce Development, the Job Center of Lake County, The Community Works, and many other organizations including faith-based agencies, Jessica has successfully been able to begin her new life, has a new job and is making plans for the future.

Jessica describes her first few weeks out of prison as overwhelming. She reunited with her teenage children and had to reenter society while many local and state offices were closed due to the pandemic. The Community Works, a non-profit organization in Waukegan, and local churches helped Jessica secure a house, furniture, and a car. She worked on projects in the community to earn items for her new home. Yvette Ewing from The Community Works explained that, when Jessica first contacted them, she needed everything. *"We partnered with other organizations to help Jessica anchor back into her community."*

Jessica's job search brought her to the on-line services of the Job Center where she applied for employment and training services. Lake County Workforce Development enrolled Jessica in a paid work experience at The Community Works.



Jessica knew that she wanted to work at one of the organizations that had helped her, and she began her paid work-experience training in May 2020. At the time, Yvette Ewing was working to transform the organization's programs to a virtual format, and Jessica's skills and experience were instrumental in helping to complete this work. In addition, Jessica did clerical work, recruited new clients, and assisted with the young people who were enrolled at the organization. Yvette noticed that among all of Jessica's skills, she had a gift connecting with youth. "They find her relatable." In September 2020, Jessica was hired as a **full time Case Manager at The Community Works**. She loves the various aspects and responsibilities of her job and the young people she helps. Jessica is fully committed to helping others and has future plans to pursue a degree in social services.

Transform Lake County

Success in serving job seekers is rooted in partnerships and collaborations. These partnerships have proven imperative during the pandemic. The Job Center of Lake County and Lake County Workforce Development are partners with the College of Lake County to serve students in the [CLC Transform Lake County Program](#). Transform Lake County is a program funded by the State of IL through the ICCB and provides full-tuition grants in short term programs at the College of Lake County. The goal of the program is to create more equity in the Lake County workforce.

Michael is a professional with years of experience including 15 years working for the State of Illinois, but his education has not kept up with that experience. While between jobs in 2019, he began seriously considering college, but he was concerned about affording school and whether he could succeed in school - he hadn't been in a classroom for over a decade. Transform Lake County addressed his concerns, providing him the support (both financial and emotional) as well as small classes. Michael began coursework to complete a certificate in Administrative Management & Technology at the **College of Lake County** in February 2020. Michael says that the coursework transitioned seamlessly to an online environment when COVID-19 struck. Michael finished his final class in August 2020 and began looking for a job. *"I was determined to make that certificate work for me."*



Graduates of Transform Lake County are referred to the Job Center of Lake County for job readiness training and job search assistance. Through the Job Center, Michael began working with Workforce Development and was assessed as needing work-experience training to apply his new skills. He was enrolled in a paid work-experience at the **Waukegan Housing Authority** in October 2020. When a full-time position became available a month later, he interviewed and was hired directly by the Housing Authority. Michael now works as a **Housing Choice Voucher Case Manager**. He loves the diversity of the job, as he provides assistance to new and existing customers. *"Transform Lake County was the best thing that could have happened to me. I was afraid to take the next step in education, but I gambled on myself and won."*

Rapid Response

Workforce Development in partnership with IDES, DCEO and other partners serve as a cross-functional Rapid Response team to work with employers and dislocated workers in the event of a WARN notice. WARN is the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act established to help ensure advance notice in cases of qualified plant closings and mass layoffs. The team shares information with affected employees about unemployment benefits, support services, and employment and training programs. Because of the pandemic, this information session is being done remotely but has been just as effective in serving the dislocated worker and helping them transition into training and their next job.

Training and employment programs can be customized to the needs of the laid off worker group as was the case with a mass layoff of 110 employees from a manufacturing company in May 2020. Workforce Development partnered with the training provider Symbol Training Institute to fast-track 13 of the impacted workers through CNC training funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) grant. All 13 graduated from the program before the end of 2020. Reece was one of these impacted workers.

Reece was laid off from his job as a Machine Operator and started training at **Symbol Training Institute** in Addison, IL in June 2020.

Despite the pandemic, classes had to take place onsite because of the hands-on nature of learning to set up, operate, and troubleshoot machines, mills and lathes. Reece expanded his knowledge of quality control and

blueprint reading in the class and even got to make a necklace pendant as an in-class project. He graduated in November 2020 with a CNC certificate and three credentials from the National Institute for Metalworking Skills. He landed another job as a **Machine Operator** immediately after graduation. Because Reece demonstrated initiative by updating his skills and earning industry-recognized credentials, he will continue his training on the job, setting up machines with the goal to be promoted to a Setup 1 position in 2021.



The Job Center of Lake County is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. All voice telephone numbers may be reached by persons using TTY/TDD equipment by calling TTY 800-526-0844 or 711. To request accommodations, contact dharris@lakecountyil.gov or 847-377-3423.